

Introduction to Western Political Thought
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Lecture 23
Hegel –1 Intro and Freedom

Hello and welcome everyone. Today, we are going to start with a new thinker in western political thought, Hegel. On Hegel, we are going to have three lectures. In the first lecture, today, we will discuss his brief historical, political, and intellectual contexts. We will look at his personal life in the first part of the lecture, today. Then we will move on to discuss his views on freedom.

In the second lecture on Hegel, we will discuss his views on particularly, state, civil society, and family, and how he saw it as the unfolding of the human or universal spirit. In the concluding lecture on Hegel, we will particularly discuss his views on the right or philosophy of right. In the second part of the lecture, we will discuss the critical assessment or critical reflection on Hegelian philosophy, and its influence on western political thought.

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- Hegel was the most influential thinker of a school of philosophy known as 'German Idealism'. This school is associated with Immanuel Kant. Fichte and Schelling further developed this tradition. Hegel is said to be the culmination of this philosophical tradition. He took it to the next level by providing it a much more historical and contextual form, in other words, the real substance to abstraction. He argued about the primacy of ideas in the march of history or human progress. He saw it as a result of dialectics.
- Hegel's philosophy in a way combined both the German Romantics and Enlightenment traditions. His conceptions of freedom, rights, or views on history, human progress, master and slave, self and other, family, civil society, and state were profoundly shaped by his belief in the unfolding of universal spirit or mind (*Geist*). He argued that every phenomenon on earth – animate or inanimate – is the manifestation of the same spirit which is in constant motion and higher stages of realization. Human beings as individuals also carry such spirit which they manifest in different spheres of their lives starting from family to civil society and finally in the state. According to Hegel the full realization of human freedom is possible only in the life of state which he saw as the march of God on earth.
- One could understand the overwhelming influence of Hegel's philosophy by this fact that the German philosophy was broadly divided into two schools after his death – Left Hegelians and Right Hegelians. Former saw in Hegel's philosophy a great many radical possibilities; whereas, for the latter, Hegel was a conservative thinker defending the *status quo*.

Let us start with his personal, political, and intellectual context. And his views on freedom. Hegel was part of a tradition of thought in the continental or European

philosophy which we call the 'German Idealism'. This school of thought had a profound influence on continental philosophy or European philosophy.

There was the kind of divide between what is the ultimate reality? Is it the idea, or the matter? 'German idealism' had very decisively established the primacy of idea and Hegel was the most influential thinker or the culmination of this school of thought that we called 'German Idealism'. He remained a profound thinker of this school of thought, where one could see a kind of not just establishing the primacy of idea. But also, in a very unique way transcending this difference between the material and ideal.

It is the boundary, that division, we often make in our intellectual discussions about what is real, material, or only those things which we can perceive through our sense perception should be the basis of the scientific knowledge. And things which are not possible to perceive through sense perceptions are something which we should not bother too much about. So, this difference between a material and the ideal was somewhat getting transcended in the philosophy of Kant, Hegel, and many other thinkers in 'German Idealism'.

Hegel is one of the profound influential thinkers of 'German Idealism' and as a school of thought, it was associated with Immanuel Kant. Kant had established the role of reason and rationality as the way forward to enlightenment, for the individual and society as a whole.

But also, he profoundly and conclusively established the limits of human reason and human rationality. Then how one should still be guided by reason and rationality by following what he called the 'categorical imperative' that is the basis of 'German Idealism'.

Fichte and Schelling further developed this tradition of 'German Idealism' and one can regard Hegel as the culmination of this philosophical tradition who took it to the next level by providing it a historical and contextual form. In other words, the real substance to abstraction.

In much of Kant's writings, there was a great preference for abstraction. What is unique about Hegel's contribution to 'German Idealism' was he not only acknowledged the relevance or significance of the particular and material. But he considered it as the basis of the realization of the abstract or ethical or universal.

Hegel in a sense truly transcended that boundary between the real and the material, the particular and the universal, the contextual, or the abstract. So, as we discuss further his views on human freedom, family, civil society, state, and his views on the history or unfolding of the human spirit, we will come to know that Hegel had acknowledged the historical or particular context as necessary or prerequisite for the realization of humanist spirit or human freedom.

In Hegel, one would not find just a kind of abstract or formal sense of understanding about human freedom, human reason, or rationality. But also, a kind of historical and contextual approach to understanding these things. Like Kant, he did not remain confined to the realm of the abstract. But also, he acknowledged and transcended the particular historical and contextual existence of these things.

Hegel like other thinkers of 'German Idealism' had argued about the primacy of ideas in the march of history or human progress. He saw it as a result of dialectics and this point we will discuss when we discuss his views on freedom. But dialectics is this understanding of opposites and how the interaction of opposites constitutes reality or the nature of the phenomenon and further development of that phenomenon or development of reality as the next stage of history. It is the movement of this struggle between the opposites and its reconciliation through synthesis.

In popular terminology, one can understand dialectics through the idea of thesis, antithesis, and synthesis. The movement of history, in a way, was the human movement for progress. So one stage of life led to the next stage of life that was more mature and progressive than the previous stage. That is a result of this struggle between the opposites.

Thesis, anti-thesis, and the contradiction between the two led to the next stage of life that is called synthesis. And again, the next stage would be a result of further contradiction that led further to the next stage of human history.

So, in such movement of history through dialectics, Hegel gave primacy to the ideas and we will discuss it when we will look at the critical assessment of Hegel's philosophy that how Marx, and other materialist philosophers argued, it was not the idea but the matter or the material condition or context that shaped the human ideas, imagination, and consciousness. Therefore, it played a decisive role in human history through his idea of historical materialism.

But for Hegel, the primacy was that of ideas. So, the movement in history was the result of a struggle between the opposites, where the primary force in history were the ideas. Hegel's philosophy in a way combined this to a strong or intellectual tradition in Germany that of the German romanticism and Enlightenment tradition.

While discussing Kant, we have discussed how enlightenment thinkers thought that reason and rationality would be a way forward for humanity or human progress or prosperity. In contrast to that, there are many thinkers such as Rousseau or Goethe and many other thinkers in the German and European tradition, who were arguing that human reasons had limits. And it created new challenges or problems for society.

So, they were thinking about a kind of uncontaminated or honest, simple life with nature, without much use of human reason or human rigorous inquiry into the reality and then transforming what the reality is.

The romantics were thinking about going back to nature or to the stage of life where human life was simple. The association was based on mutual trust without driven by the clever calculation of instrumental rationality. There was a strong attraction for this kind of romantic thoughts as well. In Hegel, we find that how he also acknowledged the role of passion, desires, and yet established the solid role of human reason and rationality to guide human will or human freedom.

So, in Hegel, one finds the combination of both these traditions. The German romantics and enlightenment tradition and his conceptions of freedom, rights or views on history, human progress, the relationship between master and slave, and self and other, his views on families, civil society, and the state were profoundly shaped by his belief in the unfolding of universal spirit or mind which he called the 'Geist'. He argued that every phenomenon on earth is animate or inanimate as the manifestation of the same universal spirit or mind. And this universal mind or spirit is in constant motion.

There is a kind of constant movement in the history of universal spirit or world spirit and a higher stage of the realization of such spirit. So, human history in that sense is the constant forward movement of world spirit or humanist spirit manifested in every sphere of life. Both animate or inanimate being is part of that universal spirit and human beings as individuals, according to Hegel, also carries such spirit which they manifest in different spheres of their life.

Starting from the family, civil society, and finally, in the state. So, our social, political, moral world of a human being is constitutive of this movement of spirit or world-spirit or unfolding of spirit that constantly realized. Its maturity depends on the society or community which allows the human being to follow their free will, to use their free reason, and not be guided by external authority or norms set by others.

So, there is the role of human reason or rationality. But it must be realized that only in the association with others in the family, civil society, and state. Because for Hegel, the full realization of human freedom was possible only in the life of state that is the ultimate realization or maturity or complete maturity of human beings.

Human beings also start from an immature condition to the fullest maturity in the life of the state. We will discuss more in the second lecture on Hegel that how human beings constantly actualize or themselves by living in different domains of life. And his full realization of maturity is possible only in the state while living among the free and equal members.

Therefore, he saw the state as the manifestation of universal will or God and he called it the 'march of God' on the earth. So, human beings when leading free life in the life of a state that allows him and her to realize their freewill. What is this free will? We will discuss this later in this lecture. But the basic argument in Hegel was that human beings could realize their true freedom or actualizes on the self fully in the life of a state that is the representative of universal will or spirit of God in essence.

In Hegel, one has this combination of both as I said, the romantics and also the enlightenment tradition in German intellectual tradition. One could understand the overwhelming influence of Hegel's philosophy by the fact that the German philosophy was broadly divided into two schools, after Hegel's death.


That is left Hegelians and right Hegelians. The left Hegelian saw in Hegel's philosophy a great many radical possibilities and provided a much more radical revolutionary interpretation of Hegel's work. Whereas the right Hegelian saw Hegel as a conservative thinker who defended the status quo.

So, there is a kind of very opposite interpretation of Hegel's philosophy by these two schools of German philosophy, the left Hegelian and right Hegelian. The other point that one needs to understand is the overwhelming influence of Hegel's philosophy, where you have to be Hegelian whether it is right or left, how you interpret it may differ. Nonetheless, the influence of Hegel's philosophy is overwhelming in the further development of German philosophical tradition.

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Hegel: Political and Intellectual Context

- Hegel's intellectual context was full of historical and epoch-making possibilities. Philosophy truly had a tremendous influence on politics and historical events. It shaped the destinies of mankind and became the foundation of modern political imagination. French revolution in particular shook the monarchies and dynasties across Europe. Hegel too was profoundly influenced by the French Revolution and its promises of rule by the people and republican values of liberty, equality, and fraternity. Hegel saw in Napoleon the manifestation of what he calls manifestation of the universal world spirit.
- Germany that Hegel inhabited was divided into 300 small kingdoms and principalities. Prussia among them was regarded as the strongest and most enlightened state. French under the rule of Napoleon Bonaparte sought to reunite Europe through wars and territorial expansions. It defeated Prussia too in the battle of Jena. At the time Hegel was teaching at the University of Jena and was working on his *magnum opus* *Phenomenology of Spirit*. The defeat of Prussia, in the battle of Jena, exposed its military weakness and also led to the demand for the unification of Germany.
- It was also a magnificent era of greats in German intellectual history. Immanuel Kant and his philosophy provided the sound basis to the enlightenment by rescuing it from the clutches of skeptics or empiricists. He is regarded as the founder of German Idealism. German Romanticism had the greatest reflections in Goethe's works, Beethoven in Music, and Schelling, Schiller, and Fichte in Philosophy. Thus, Germany during the Hegel's period was experiencing profound developments in arts, science, and philosophy.



Now, we will look at the political and the intellectual context of Hegel that was a kind of full of historical and epoch-making possibilities. So, there were new ways of theorizing and thinking about politics, individual freedom, human reason, and how it could help in the progress of mankind or humanity.

So, the context, political, and intellectual context of Hegel when he was writing or developing his thought was full of such historical possibilities, where human thought or philosophy had a profound influence in shaping the destiny of mankind or in organizing the collective life of the nation. Also, thinking about new ways of organizing social and political life.

It was full of historical and epoch-making possibilities and philosophy in the true sense of the term that had a tremendous influence on the politics and historical events. It saved the destinies of mankind and became the foundation of modern political imagination, so much of our thinking about the state, freedom, human rights or human identity or self-consciousness or individual rights were shaped by these philosophical discussions and debates taking place in Germany.

It also resulted in the French Revolution which was the particular epoch-making event for the modern sensibilities to emerge. It was the very foundation of liberty, equality, and fraternity. It was also a kind of republican way of organizing collective political life.

So, the French Revolution which we have discussed while discussing Rousseau that much of its ideas were derived from Rousseau's political writings. He shaped historical epoch-making events like the French Revolution.

And after the French Revolution, there was a kind of new development or rediscovery of Rousseau, to understand many developments that were taking place after the French Revolution and the motives for that revolution. Because the prevalent system or political system was that of the monarchy. It was considered like the given thing that people themselves could not govern and it led to many instabilities or kind of reign of terror.

There was a divide among the intellectuals when it comes to support or oppose the French Revolution. Nonetheless, it shook the monarchies and dynasties across Europe. There was a real danger about the people destabilizing the existing monarchies and dynasties across Europe.

Hegel too was profoundly influenced by the French Revolution and its promises of rule by people and republican values such as liberty, equality, and fraternity. Hegel also saw in Napoleon, the manifestation of what he called the universal will or world spirit. So, it was historically political or an epoch-making context where Hegel was developing his thought on the state, Prussia. It was a part of Germany that was divided into 300 small kingdoms and principalities.

Thus, modern Germany is very different from Germany that Hegel inhabited. It was divided into different principalities or smaller principalities numbered around 300. Prussia was a part of that 300 small kingdoms or principalities that was regarded as the strongest among them and the most enlightened state. So much of the political philosophy or development in arts, culture, and literature, in music, science, and military craft were under the enlightened rule of Frederick in Prussia.

However, the French under the rule of Napoleon Bonaparte sought to reunite Europe, through wars and territorial expansions. It defeated Prussia in the Battle of Jena and at this time, when this battle of Jena was taking place between the Kingdom of Prussia and the French army of Napoleon Bonaparte, Hegel was teaching at the University of Jena. He was working on his magnum opus called *Phenomenology of Spirit*. This is the most influential text of Hegel which shaped many of his other writings.

So, whether it is about his views on freedom, his ideas on a state or civil society, or his ideas on the philosophy of religion, history, and also the history of philosophy, it is seen as a kind of movement of spirit, or what he called the 'Geist'. So, he was working on this manuscript when Napoleon's army was fighting this battle of Jena and the defeat of Prussia in the battle had exposed the military weakness of the Prussian kingdom. It led to the demand for the unification of Germany.

It was also kind of politically turbulent time and as we have discussed in other thinkers, Hegel was also responding to those political changes in the real practical world taking place. And at the same time, reflecting upon the intellectual discussions and debates, whether it was the romantics or enlightenment thinkers.

So, it was a magnificent era of greats or many greats in the German intellectual tradition. Immanuel Kant and his philosophy had provided the sound basis for the enlightenment by rescuing it from the clutches of skeptics or empiricists, as we have discussed in the previous lectures the enlightenment tradition was divided into two sharp groups.

Where one was believing in reason and rationality, and subjecting everything to human thought or human inquiry through reason and rationality. There were the skeptics, so they were skeptics who were apprehensive about everything given. They wanted to use human reason and only those things which could convince human beings through their reason were acceptable.

In other words, reason and rationality alone were the sources of knowledge. Therefore, everything must be subjected to critical inquiry, so there were the skeptics. The other was

the empiricist who believed that human beings acquire knowledge about the world through experiences.

So, there was *tabula rasa* or how human beings start his life as a blank slate and only by living in the society, community, nation, and state through experiences that human being derives knowledge about the world. There are the empiricists and skeptics, where one is focusing on the reason and rationality, and the other is focusing on the experiences.

We have seen through Kant that how he tried to unite or transcend this contradiction within the enlightenment tradition, by establishing the use of reason and rationality and acknowledging the role of human senses. How it led to perception and perception requires the role of reason and rationality for knowledge to be sound. So, all kinds of senses, and it cannot be the basis of true knowledge or knowledge that requires the role or involvement of human reason and intellect.

We have all kinds of sense of sensory experiences. But that is not the true basis of our knowledge of the world. We organize or refine it and that organizing and refining of our sensory experience of the world require the role of human reason and rationality. Therefore, Kant tried to do in a way, that could unite these two groups within the enlightenment tradition.

And he was regarded as the founder of 'German Idealism'. Hegel and many other philosophers had argued that Kant would be the beginning of philosophy and then he went on to criticize particularly his views on freedom that was too abstract, according to Hegel.

Thus, German romanticism had the greatest reflections in Goethe's work, such as literature, art, Beethoven in music, and Schelling, Schiller, and Fichte in philosophy. So, Germany during Hegel's period was experiencing profound developments in art, science, and philosophy. That was both the intellectual and the political contexts of Hegel.

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Hegel (1770-1831): Brief Bio-sketch

- George Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel was born in 1770 at Stuttgart in Germany. His father was a subordinate official in the finance department of the Wurtemberg state. After his schooling there, he went to Tübingen to study philosophy and theology. Hegel was profoundly influenced by Greek literature as well.
- After the completion of his studies, he worked as a tutor for the wealthy families in Switzerland and Frankfurt. During these years, he also developed his essays on religion and theology, which he did not publish during his lifetime. Considering freedom as important attributes of human beings, Hegel, in these essays combined human freedom with the reason (Kantian ethics) and love (Teachings of Jesus). He also compared Christ with the teachings of Socrates on ethics. He argued that orthodox religion is a barrier to the realization of human freedom and reasons. It subordinates them to external authority. These essays are now published as *Early Theological Writings*. Many scholars consider this a key text to understand Hegel's philosophy.
- Hegel started his professional career as a lecturer at the University of Jena on the recommendation of his friend and contemporary turned rival in later years, Schelling. It is at the University of Jena, he wrote his magnum opus – *Phenomenology of Spirit* (1807). While he was still working on this manuscript, Hegel saw Napoleon's army marching into the city. After the defeat of Prussia in the battle of Jena, the university was closed down.

Now, we come to discuss, briefly, his personal life. So, George Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel was born in the 1770s, in Stuttgart. It is in the southwestern province of Germany. His father was a subordinate official in the Finance department of the Wurtemberg state. He started with very modest living and moderate thinking or expectation from life.

He was not a very bright student from the beginning. He gradually developed his thought by combining the prevalent schools of thought led by many other thinkers, such as Schelling, Schiller, and Fichte in 'German Idealism' and certainly, Immanuel Kant.

So, after his schooling in Stuttgart, he went to Tübingen to study philosophy and theology. He was profoundly influenced by Greek literature. He regarded it as a kind of something which should be respected or asserted with pride that we derive our sense of duty, morality, or reason and rationality through Greeks, and not through some stern religion as he accused many other states in Europe, deriving their inspiration from the stern religion. Whereas Germany, including himself, was deriving their inspiration from the Greek literature.

So, Greek literature certainly played a very significant role in the development of Hegelian thought and philosophy. After the completion of his studies, Hegel worked as a tutor for the wealthy families in Switzerland and Frankfurt. During these years, he also

developed his essays on religion and theology. Interestingly, he never published it during his lifetime.

So, when he was working as a tutor to some of the rich families in Bern in Switzerland or Frankfurt, he was developing his thoughts on religion and theology, and there was a reason for that. As we have discussed that the critique of enlightenment thinkers was directed towards religion. Because it used to control every sphere of life, from childbirth to his death, from the kingdom to dynasties, from family to the community.

In a sense, much of the development was taking place within the religious reforms of the Protestant ethics that led to new ways of thinking about human identity, human freedom, and organization of collective social and political life.

Hegel also begins his speculation or thinking about political issues or philosophy by criticizing theology and religion. But interestingly, he never published it during his lifetime.

Considering human freedom as an important attribute of human beings, he regarded freedom. It is restrained from any external control or subjugation. That is the basis for all progress and Hegel would acknowledge that human freedom or freedom is the important attribute of human beings. In his essay, Hegel combined human freedom with the reason, the role of reason, such as in Kant or the Kantian ethics is the combination of both human reason and morality or a sense of duty.

It is derived by using one's reason and not being dependent on others, such as religion or society or community to tell us what to do, and what is good for us. So, you recall the Kantian views on enlightenment. It was coming out of one self-imposed immaturity condition and immaturity condition cannot be overcome. Human beings, the majority of them at least, according to Kant, lacked the courage to act upon their own will or reason. That is the problem or obstacle in the enlightenment for the society or individual.

So, he combined human freedom with reason such as in Kantian ethics and love or compassion. That is the teaching of Jesus. He also compared Christ with the teachings of Socrates on ethics and argued that orthodox religion is a barrier or obstacle in the

realization of human freedom and the reasons. So, human freedom and reason cannot flourish unless there is denial or subjecting the religious orthodoxy to critical rational inquiry.

If ethics or morality is guided by a notion of religion or a kind of orthodoxy or what is prevalent in society, then one is not free. One would not be using his/her reason. So, he considered the orthodoxy or orthodox religion as an obstacle in the progress of human freedom and human reason.

Human freedom and reason are realizable in the absence of any external control or subjugation including the orthodox religion. When Hegel and many other philosophers were discussing their ideas and developing their political philosophical argument, the major restraint on such argument was coming from the religious orthodoxy or the religious conservatism that does not allow certain ideas seen as destabilizing the status quo or prevalent structure of power in society.

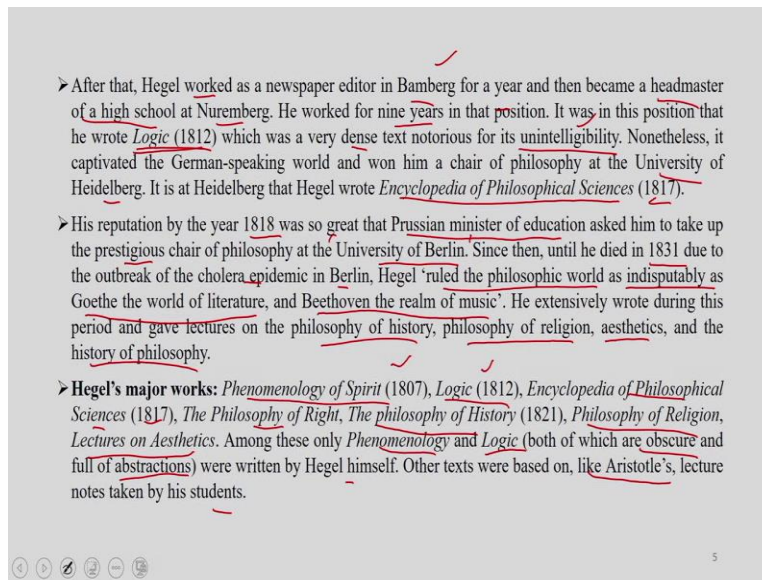
Hegel in this text considered orthodox religion as a barrier to the realization of human freedom and reason. Because it subordinates human beings to external authority. So, the religious orthodoxy and the values or ethics that it prescribes is not based on the individual self-developed human capacity of reason or human will. Therefore, anything not based on human reason or will is not the basis for his morality and ethics. The sense of ethics, morality, or duty or obligation must necessarily be based on human reason or understanding its duty.

These essays are now published as early theological writings. But as I said, it was not published during his lifetime. However, many scholars consider this a key text to understand Hegel's philosophy. That is the beginning or foundational text to understand other writings of Hegel.

He had started his professional career as a lecturer at the University of Jena on the recommendation of his friend, Schelling and contemporary turned rivals in the later years. It was at the University of Jena that he wrote his magnum opus, *Phenomenology of a Spirit* in 1807. While he was still working on this manuscript, Hegel saw Napoleon's

army marching into the city after the defeat of Prussia in the Battle of Jena. The university was closed and then Hegel started to explore newer opportunities.

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After the closure of the university, Hegel worked as a newspaper editor in Bamberg for a year and then became a headmaster of a high school in Nuremberg. It was surprising to know that as a headmaster of a high school, Hegel continued to work on philosophy. It is highly unlikely to expect in the contemporary modern world.

He worked as the headmaster of a high school for nine years and it was in this position that he wrote *Logic* in 1812 which was a very dense text notorious for its unintelligibility.

Nonetheless, it captivated the German-speaking world and won him a chair of philosophy at the University of Heidelberg. It was at Heidelberg that Hegel wrote *Encyclopedia of Philosophical Science*, 1870. His reputation by the year 1818 was so great that the Prussian Minister of Education asked him to take up a prestigious chair of philosophy at the University of Berlin, which was the prestigious position among the philosophers in the German-speaking world.

Since, then in the year 1818, he took up the chair of philosophy at the University of Berlin, until his death in 1831 due to the outbreak of the cholera epidemic in Berlin and

the rest of Europe. Hegel ruled the philosophic world as indisputably as Goethe, the world of literature and Beethoven, the realm of music.

He was the indisputable king of the philosophic world. As I said at the beginning of this lecture, there was the overwhelming influence of Hegelian thought and philosophy on the later generation that was divided into young Hegelians as leftist and rightist with the very contradictory interpretation of Hegelian philosophy.

Since, his appointment as the chair of philosophy at the University of Berlin in 1818 till his death in 1831, Hegel was the undisputable leader in the philosophic world like Goethe in the literature or Beethoven in the realm of music. He extensively wrote during this period and gave lectures on the philosophy of history, philosophy of religion, aesthetics, and history of philosophy.

If we look at the major works of Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit* 1807, *Logic* 1812, *Encyclopedia of Philosophical Sciences*, 1817, *The Philosophy of Rights*, *The Philosophy of History* 1821, *Philosophy of Religion* and lectures on aesthetics, and there were much other compilation of Hegelian work. Among these only, the *Phenomenology of Spirit* and *Logic* were said to be written by Hegel. Both of these texts were very obscure and full of abstract ideas and abstraction. So, it is not easy to read them.


Like Kant, you have that problem of abstraction or modification of each sentence and the density that is hard to decipher for the ordinary readers. So, both these texts are notorious for their obscurity and abstraction. But it has abiding influence or profound influence in the German-speaking world as we have discussed earlier that Hegel became the undisputed leader in the philosophic world.

The other texts were based on Aristotle's lecture notes taken by his students. So, in Aristotle's politics, it is said that texts, books, or chapters of that text were not chronologically arranged. The reason being that it was based on the compilation of notes taken by his student, not necessarily or organized coherently by the author itself. Similarly, many of the Hegelian work was based on the lecture notes taken by his students.

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Views on Freedom

- Hegel acknowledges freedom as the fundamental attributes of human beings. However, he differed substantially from the abstract, liberal, and Kantian notions of freedom. Liberals, generally, define freedom as the absence of external constraints. In other words, freedom is associated with human beings having options to choose whatever he or she wants or desires. For Hegel, it is a merely formal or abstract notion of freedom without substance.
- Hegel argued that such notions of freedom do not truly represent the human free will, or right, or even ethical living. If freedom is taken to begin with choices of the individuals in isolation from everything else such as family, community, or state, then according to Hegel, such exercise of freedom could not be regarded as free will. He was equally critical of the Hobbesian notion of freedom which argued that freedom is the relentless pursuit of endless human desires.
- In contrast to the liberal conception of freedom, Hegel argued that individual freedom is realizable in the 'embodiment of other'. Thus freedom for Hegel is 'being at home with oneself in (one's other)'. His conception of freedom is thus based on his philosophy of 'spirit' (Geist) and its constant unfolding in history through what he calls the struggle of opposites. It is also known as Hegelian dialectics. For him, human history, which is the history of progress, is the result of this struggle between the opposites and their transcendence.



Now, we move on to his views on freedom. Hegel acknowledged freedom as the fundamental attribute of human beings. So, all progress, the realization of self, or the development of self-consciousness are possible only through human freedom or in a society that permits an individual to use his reason, to express his will, and then guide his action, according to his reason and free will.

There is in Hegel a kind of comparative study with different civilizations at different stages of maturity. That depends upon how much freedom they allow their individual. So, the society or civilization gives more freedom to the individual to use their reason to express their will, their action is a reflection of their will that society will be much more mature, progressive than others which limits its freedom and reason.

He regarded freedom as the fundamental attribute of a human being. However, he differed substantially from the abstract liberal and the Kantian notion of freedom. There is a kind of counter-intuitive approach to understanding human freedom in Hegel.

So, much of the liberals under Kantian notions of freedom certainly, Kant was more abstract theoretical in a sense that he wanted individuals to think for themselves that he is free and act accordingly, as if he is free, even if there are obstacles and challenges to each

freedom. It is only when an individual began to first think that he or she is free then enlightenment can be brought about on a larger scale in society.

Liberals, on the other hand, generally, defined freedom as the absence of external constraints. So, one is free to the extent that one's actions are not controlled or regulated by the external authority. So, for Isaiah Berlin, (42:04) the whole idea of negative freedom is 'I am free to the extent where I am not interfered with by others or regulated or controlled by others'.

So, liberals defined this freedom as the absence of external constraints or impediments on human action. In other words, freedom is associated with human beings, having the option or choice to choose whatever he or she wants or desire. The freedom or liberty in the literal sense of the term means that human beings are free to choose what she or he desires. And freedom means the absence of any constraints, limits, or control on this exercise of human choice.

Human beings are free or considered to be free to the extent he or she is capable of choosing what she should do and what she should not do and she or he alone does that. It is not the external authority, family, parents, teachers, society, state which decides for them what is good.

So, the very premise of a liberal understanding of freedom is the absence of restraint and a degree of human choice. For Hegel, such understanding of freedom is merely formal or abstract which does not express or reflect genuine freedom or what he calls the substance. There is this kind of thinking in the writings of (43:46) or to some extent Foucault and many other scholars who argued that freedom is not the absence of impediment or restraints alone or to be exercised in isolation from others in the society.

So, liberty or freedom is also seen, 'I am self-defining autonomous subject free to do what I wish to do and I should be left to do what is self-regarding function'. We will discuss it in John Stuart Mill.

But this self-centric notion of freedom does not according to Hegel gives the human being, the true freedom or expression of his will possible to actualize or realize only in

association with others in the family, civil society, and sphere of the state, when individuals are guided by their reason or exercise of free will. It acknowledges the existence of others and in association with others, individuals realize or develop their self-consciousness.

So, the true freedom or realization of true freedom is possible only in association with others and not in the absence of others. In Hegel, there is a counter-intuitive understanding of freedom or a substantial notion of freedom that acknowledged and recognized the existence of others.

Hegel argued it as a nuisance or liberal notions of freedom that did not truly represent the human free will. He gave will a very specific meaning that is different from reason and rationality alone. It combined both reason and rationality with human passion and desire. So, there is a kind of ethical turn in the Hegelian philosophy.

He argued that such notions of freedom as the absence of external expediments are not something that truly represents the human free will or right, or even ethical living. If freedom is taken to begin with choices of the individual, in isolation from everything else such as family, community, or state, then according to Hegel, such exercise of freedom could not be regarded as free will.

So the will is not just being guided by your desire and passion to do anything that you want to do. It must be subjected to one's reason and a kind of taking a bet. When one desires something, one must recognize that it acknowledges that. But then to use one's reason whether that is doable or not, in the given context.

There is a kind of both the acknowledgment of personal goal or desire or motives. But it must be subjected to one's reason and rationality to know whether that is doable or not, should be done or not, the consequences of it. So, in the kind of practical aspect to the realization of freedom, not merely the abstract understanding of being free to do whatever one wants to do.

So, that practical aspect will come only when humans realize that freedom or strive for the realization of such freedom in association with others in the life of family,

community, or state. He was equally critical of the Hobbesian notion of freedom which argued that freedom is the relentless pursuit of endless human desires.

So, he defined the human being as the self-guided mechanism of desire and aversion, desire is something which human beings constantly try to fulfill and aversion is something which he wants to avoid. Thus, anything that gives satisfaction or fulfills his desire, leads to happiness and anything that is a threat to the realization of his desire is seen as aversion, or he or she wants to avoid that.

And freedom for Hobbes was the absence of any kind of external impediment in the human being pursuit of relentless desire. He regarded life as the endless desire, human beings as a self-driven subject who has desires. It is the desire that makes human life worth living for and life is to constantly pursue those desires and there should not be any limit to human desires.

Hegel critiqued such understanding of freedom as the relentless pursuit of human desires or passion. So, in contrast to the liberal conception of freedom, Hegel argued that individual freedom was realizable only in the embodiment of others. This is the very premise of Hegelian philosophy that self-actualization or self-realization requires the presence of others. Thus, freedom and its realization are possible in the embodiment of others.

So, 'I am free to the extent, I realized my self in others'. This is the freedom for Hegel is being at home, one's true self or guided by one's will with oneself in one other. The dialectics of self and others, in a sense, the opposite is the necessary event to realize one's freedom, consciousness, or free will.

He defined freedom as something which is being at home with oneself or with one other. His conception of freedom was thus based on his philosophy of spirit, 'Geist' and its constant unfolding in history through what he calls the struggles of opposites. So, it is known as the Hegelian dialectics. For him, human history is the history of progress. This is the constant realization of maturity and the full realization of such maturity is possible only in the life of the state.

So, human history in that sense is the forward movement towards this realization of progress or maturity which is the result of this struggle between the opposites and their transcendence. Hegelian dialectics means that there is a constant struggle of opposites and this struggle constitutes reality or phenomenon or even human subject.

How do you get to know yourself? By comparing yourself with others or by differentiating yourself from others. The comparison and differentiation of the self from others requires the presence of others and it is by differentiating oneself from others, one gets to know one's self better.

Therefore, in Hegelian philosophy and the understanding of self or reality requires one to understand the opposites and relationship with the opposites. The struggle that is the police what constitutes this self is the transcendence of that opposites.

So, human beings constantly achieve a higher stage of maturity by differentiating oneself from the others and then transcending that self, refining his self using his reason and free will by differentiating with others. Then constantly try to pursue higher stages of life, maturity, and higher stages of progress.

Similar is the case with society, community, and the state or even civilization, where the reality is the contradiction of opposites. There would be a very profound thesis. There would be the simultaneous presence of the anti-thesis of that profound thesis and the contradiction between the two lead to the next stage of human progress or civilizational development which he called the synthesis.

Similar is the case with human freedom. It is possible to realize human freedom in association with others in this sphere of family, civil society, are finally in this sphere of the state.

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- Hegelian dialectics (thesis, antithesis, and synthesis) is based on the idea that the best way to understand the reality and true nature of a phenomenon, is to methodologically approach it with its opposites. Thus reality and phenomenon, according to Hegel, are constituted by both its contradiction and resolution of these contradictions. It also defines the true nature of a phenomenon.
- To understand the Hegelian notion of freedom, then, it is necessary to understand his conception of spirit (*Geist*). He characterized it into different historical stages. It starts with the human agency with capable of willing and acting according to their own free will, a spirit of human collectivity in a particular historical-political context, which he also called *Zeitgeist* (spirit of the age), and finally God or ultimate or full realization of human freedom or will. It is possible, according to Hegel, only in a state.
- Thus for Hegel, human history is in a way movement or unfolding of spirit. He also calls it world spirit. According to him, different civilizations are at a different level of maturity depending upon their culture that gives freedom to individuals to realize their own free will. He considered his own age, and more importantly his own philosophy as the highest stage of civilization or human freedom, although it is debatable.

Hegelian dialectics, that is the thesis, antithesis, and synthesis were based on the idea that the best way to understand the reality or true nature of a phenomenon is to methodologically approach it with its opposites, and always think of phenomena with its opposite.

So, there is a kind of relative terms, nothing is absolute and abstract in isolation from everything else, and everything is interconnected. In Hegelian philosophy, as I have said, both the animate and inanimate subject is the manifestation of the 'Geist' or the universal world spirit.

The Hegelian methodology is to approach a phenomenon or reality by looking at its opposites. This reality and phenomena, according to Hegel, are constituted by both its contradictions that are the opposites. So, the self and others. Both are not the same. But are mutually interconnected by providing meaning to each other.

So, by differentiating oneself from others, one gets to know one's self. Similarly, this is the case with others, so the self and others are then mutually interconnected. Yet one realizes oneself by transcending that interconnection between the self and others. So, it is true the reality and every phenomenon on earth constituted by both the contradictions of opposites and the resolution of these contradictions. That is the transcendence of those

contradictions which leads to the next stage of individual maturity, the realization of his freedom or rationality, and also the development and progress of society.

It also defines the true nature of the phenomenon that is every phenomenon and reality tries to reach the next stage by transcending the opposites and the contradictions between the opposites. So, to understand the Hegelian notion of freedom, then it is necessary to understand his conception of spirit or 'Geist'. He characterized it into different historical stages.

So, the spirit is something that motivates everything and it moves everything to act according to certain manners and forms depending upon both the particular context and also the urge, or inbuilt urge in the subject to realize the higher stages of development.

He characterized this spirit into different historical stages and start with human agency capable of willing or acting according to their free will. So, the movement of universal spirit or 'Geist' is first based on the individual human agency capable of willing and acting. So not just in thinking, or not just in the rational abstract sense. But in the actual practical situation, when human beings are driven by their will and courage to act according to that free will.

So that is the first stage. The human subject must be willing or capable of acting according to his or her free will. That is the first stage and this is not a kind of final or absolute realization. It is realized through the course of association with others at different stages of like and there is the condition of constantly striving for the realization of greater freedom. That is not something one realizes for all in a particular given circumstance.

The movement of a spirit requires the individuals to be capable of having a sense of self-agency that is willing to act according to one's free will. Then a spirit of human collectivity in a particular historical-political context. It is also called the 'Zeitgeist', which is the spirit of the age.

So the individualist spirit must combine or interact with the spirit of its age, that is the collective body of human beings, and what is the spirit of that collective being or that

community. There is a difference between the individual human agency and the spirit of that is the larger group of humanity or society in a particular historical context. It is the context that embodies the certain spirit and individual subject must interact and associate with the historical, political context, called the *Zeitgeist*.

And finally, God or the ultimate or full realization of human freedom or will, and it is possible, according to Hegel, only in a state. So, the state represents the highest stage of development or human freedom or actualization of his or her free will.

So, through human life, the universal or world spirit manifests itself in the realm of families, civil society, and finally, in the state. It is the culmination of the human realization or the full or final stage of human realization, according to Hegel.

This for Hegel, human history is a way, movement, or unfolding of this spirit or 'Geist'. He also called it the world spirit. So, according to him, different civilizations are at different levels of maturity depending upon their culture that gives freedom to individuals, to realize their free will.

So, he made a comparison between the Asian, European, Greek, and Roman civilizations and then depending upon how these civilizations provide, the condition to its member to use their freedom or free will, the progress of that civilization or maturity of that legislation is in proportion to that freedom, which they allow to its members. He saw human history as a history of progress or realization of the greater development of mankind or the maturity of a human being.

Hegel considered his age and more importantly his philosophy as the highest stage of human civilization or human knowledge or human freedom. Although, how far it is true is debatable certainly, when we think about the global institutions or organizations or life beyond the realm of the nation-state.

So, there is this debate about Hegel's argument that the state is the final culmination or the highest stage of civilization and his philosophy is the final stage of human maturity, which knew what is worth knowing for. One could debate on that. Nonetheless, in the Hegelian argument, what you have is that freedom requires the presence of others and it

is in association with others that the higher stage of realization or maturity can be achieved by individual subject, willing to act, according to their free will,

In the absence of others, as liberals argue, freedom is not true freedom or genuine freedom. It is not similar to Kantian ethics or Hobbesian ideals. In the Kantian sense, it is a kind of abstract theoretical understanding. In the Hobbesian sense, it is the constant relentless pursuit of human desire. Hegel gave it a much more ethical practical context.

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➤ Hegel argued that human will is the free and the practical or active part of the spirit. The realization of which requires the presence of others. Thus freedom manifests itself in every sphere of human endeavors – social life, morality, politics, science, art, religion, and above all in philosophy.

➤ Thus according to Hegel 'the will is free when its ends are 'its own', so that it is self-determining. The will is self-determining, in turn, when two conditions are satisfied: one 'subjective', the other 'objective'. The subjective condition requires that the will reflect on its ends and endorses them on the basis of its given desires and goals. The objective condition requires that the will pursue ends and goals that are 'rational'. Thus 'the freedom of man, as regards natural impulses, consists not in his being rid of such impulses altogether and thus striving to escape from his nature but in his recognition of them as a necessity and as something rational'.

➤ Thus freedom for Hegel is not something merely abstract or formal but it must have some particular ends and motives. Realization of which requires the presence of others. It is in contrast to others that human beings become fully conscious of their own self, desires, and motives. And its full or progressive realization is possible through living an ethical life in association with others in the family, civil society, and finally on the state.

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Hegel argued that human will is the free and practical or active part of this spirit. So, thinking alone is not enough, unless that thinking or will is guided by the practical and active part of this spirit. So, one must act according to those will or spirit which one embodies.

So, the realization of which requires the presence of others. Thus, freedom manifests itself in every sphere of human endeavors, social life, morality, politics, science, art, religion, and above all the philosophy. Thus, every sphere of human life is guided by the manifestations of human freedom.

The degree of which can be assessed based on whether that society or community gives it an individual free condition to express his will, as they see it rather than the society guiding the human spirit or expression of that spirit. Thus, according to Hegel, the will is free when its ends are it's own. That means the motives, goals of human actions are his or her own, not driven by society or community.

So, the will is said to be free only when the ends of the will, what is the desire or the motives of human action are his own and not of the society, so that it is self-determining,

only in that context when your actions are driven by your self motives or self-set goals, then your actions are self-determining or you claim to have a kind of self-determining life or free life.

The will is self-determining in turn when two conditions are satisfied. Now, there is the kind of catch in Hegelian dialectics or Hegelian sense of opposites. So, that does not mean one is driven by desires and govern one's actions, according to their desires and goals that one has set for oneself. One has to combine it with the objective free, rational will.

So, the will is self-determining, human will that is very different from human reason, rationality, and thinking. It is a combination of both. The reason and rationality and human desire and passion govern one's action. So, this will as self-determining when it meets two conditions. One is subjective and the other is objective.

One subjective and the other objective, the subjective conditions require that the will reflect its ends and endorses them based on its given desires and goal. So, as a subjective human being, one knows oneself, what is one's desires? what are one's goals? what are one's motives? The objective condition requires that will pursue ends and goals that are rational.

So, that is a kind of practical aspect to that subjective will. As a human being, one has desires, motives, plans, and goals. Only when you combine with the objective will that requires you to take a kind of backstage and then think for yourself, whether it is doable or not, practicable or not, whether you should do it or not. That requires the use of reason and rationality.

The objective condition required that the will pursue those ends are those motives or goals which are rational. That means, which can be doable that leads to greater freedom or higher stage of maturity and development for self and society. So, then the free will according to Hegel, is the mixture of both the subjective and objective will. The subjective will, one realizes what one's desires. The objective will, requires one to use one's reason to guide one's action, whether that will or desire is worth pursuing or not.

There is a kind of practical aspect to it. So that the freedom of men as regards to natural impulses consists not in his being rid of such impulses altogether and striving to escape from his nature. But in his recognition of them as necessary and something rational.

So, human freedom and realization are not to do away with desires and passion. But to acknowledge those desires or passion, and not losing the capacity to transcend those to achieve a higher stage of life. When we will discuss this movement of human beings or unfolding of spirit in human beings from the life in the family to the civil society and finally, in the state, we will see that how the materialization of different aspects of human will are possible in different stages of life and why there is the need for family, civil society, and the state.

Thus, in Hegel, what you have is not merely abstract thinking or theorization about freedom. But also, the acknowledgment of desires and passions, and then subjecting them to the reason and rationality to realize oneself. He was not looking for the escape route or completely doing away with those desires to live a moral, aesthetic kind of argument. But it is a recognition of those impulses and transcending them. The particular is as important as the general or abstract. Thus, freedom for Hegel is not something merely abstract or formal. But it must have some particular ends and motives.

So, this ends and motives of human beings are critical for the realization of human will. In the absence of that, it would be a kind of Kantian 'categorical imperative' which according to Hegel was the hollow freedom. It is the lack of all kinds of freedom. A human being progressively realizes his freedom in different spheres of life, in the life of family, civil society, and state.

The realization of which requires the presence of others as we have discussed. It is in contrast to others that human beings become fully conscious of their self, desires, and motives. So, what you think about yourself? What are one's motives and desires? We get to know when you differentiate or relate it with others.

So the presence of others is critical to know one's self, to become self-conscious, to develop one's plans and motives, and its full or progressive realization is possible

through living an ethical life in association with others in the family, civil society and finally in the state. The state provides one of the ultimate condition to realize one's full freedom or human reason.

We will discuss a part of it when we start our discussion on Hegel's views on family, civil society, and state in the next lecture. That is all for today's lecture on Hegel's political and intellectual context, and his personal life and views on freedom.

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For this lecture, you can refer to some of these texts like Beiser Frederick's, *The Cambridge Companion to Hegel*, David Butcher and Paul Kelly's, *Political Thinkers from Socrates to the Present*. You should refer to Will Durant's, *The Story of Philosophy* while discussing Kant. He has a part of that chapter devoted to Hegel and his contribution.

You can also refer to Shefali Jha's, *Western Political Thought from the Ancient Greeks to Modern Times*, James Alan Ryan's text gives a very broad introduction to Hegelian philosophy and thought. You must read Peter Singer's, *Hegel: A Very Short Introduction*, published from the Oxford University Press, 2002 and certainly, Charles Taylor's, *Hegel*, Cambridge University Press, 1977.

So, these are some of the texts, you can refer to understand more about the themes that we have discussed in this lecture. That is all in today's lecture. Do share your views and comments. We will be happy to hear and respond. Thanks for listening. Thank you all.